



## ENCYCLOPEDIA OF WOMEN AND ISLAMIC CULTURES

### African-American Muslim Communities

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#### EWIC Staff: Datasheet

- ❖ Muslims are the most racially diverse religious group in the United States.<sup>1</sup> When given the choice between Black, white, Hispanic, Asian, or other/mixed race, 23% of all U.S. Muslims describe themselves as Black. For Muslims born in the U.S., 40% describe themselves as Black. Multiple estimates of the African-American Muslim population have ranged from one-fifth to one-third of the total Muslim-American population.<sup>2</sup> Other reports have found that over half of American Muslims are African-American.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ Dr. Jamillah Karim, an African-American Muslim woman scholar, is one of the many scholars to have identified racism among Muslim-Americans of different ethnic origins. Black Muslims are often marginalized and set apart from Arab and South Asian Muslim immigrant communities. Black Muslims experience the same race, class and gender discriminations in the US as do Black non-Muslims, in addition to religious discrimination.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ In a study of U.S. mosques as determined by dominant ethnic group, 27% of mosques were associated with the African-American Muslim community.<sup>5</sup>
- ❖ It is estimated that thousands of slaves brought to the U.S. from Africa in the 17<sup>th</sup> century were Muslim.<sup>6</sup> According to Howard University African studies professor Sulayman Nyang, at least 10 percent of African slaves were from Islamic backgrounds.<sup>7</sup>
- ❖ 57% of native-born Black Muslims live in a household in which one or more people are not Muslim.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ 36% of African-American Muslims are female.<sup>8</sup>
- ❖ Dr. Amina Wadud, a prominent African-American Muslim feminist academic and Quranic exegesis and feminist has led mixed-gender prayers; in 1994 and again in 2005.<sup>9</sup>
- ❖ One of the most prominent historical figures among African-American Muslims was Malcom X, a leader in Black empowerment and civil rights movements. First associated with the Nation of Islam, Malcom X later became a Sunni Muslim and preached integration. He is remembered as one of the most important leaders of the civil rights era.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116260/muslim-americans-exemplify-diversity-potential.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.people-press.org/2011/08/30/section-1-a-demographic-portrait-of-muslim-americans/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://pewresearch.org/files/old-assets/pdf/muslim-americans.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.theislamicmonthly.com/black-muslim-american-interview-with-dr-jamillah-karim/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://iraq.usembassy.gov/resources/information/current/american/statistical.html>

<sup>6</sup> Gomez, Michael A (Nov. 1994). Muslims in Early America. *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 60(4), pp. 671-710. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2211064>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4811402>

<sup>8</sup> <http://pewresearch.org/files/old-assets/pdf/muslim-americans.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/19/nyregion/19muslim.html>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.malcolmX.com/about/bio.html>